

NEWS

BRIEFING



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Remarks prepared for delivery by

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News Briefing: Convergence of Civil-Military Polar-Orbiting Environmental Satellite Programs

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This press conference today marks a new step forward in interagency cooperation. The Department of Defense is pleased to be a key player, with the Department of Commerce/NOAA and NASA, in the convergence to a single national operational polar environmental satellite system.

This landmark decision to converge two operational satellite systems - one civil and one military - into a single national system is extremely important to both civilian and national security communities.

The Department of Defense has a requirement for assured, accurate, and timely access to environmental data critical to the operations of U.S. military forces and national systems. While DoD uses both ground-based and satellite-based environmental data, meteorological satellites are the sole source in data-sparse or data-denied areas. The primary sources of such information are the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program and NOAA's Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite program.

The United States, however, can no longer afford these separate military and civilian polar environmental satellite systems. The real challenge of this convergence initiative has been how to maintain essential civilian and national security requirements, while reducing the resources required to meet those requirements.

Convergence of the military and civil programs is considered by some to be the most significant change in operational remote sensing in the United States since the weather satellites' inception in April 1960. Never before has the United States taken core national security requirements, that must be satisfied during conflict or war, and merged them into a civil system to make a single operational system.

We believe this integrated approach to manage, acquire, and operate this national system will meet the needs of both the civil and national security communities. In addition, this approach builds an interdependency among the agencies to meet those needs and thereby provides the underpinnings of success. At the same time, it allows the agencies to accomplish this in a more cost-effective manner than we could do separately, saving money for the taxpayer, the government, and each agency.

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The integrated management structure builds on the inherent expertise of each agency, thereby strengthening the converged program. The Department of Defense accepts the responsibility of supporting the Integrated Program Office as lead agency for acquisition. DoD is well equipped to conduct the acquisition necessary to meet the program cost, performance, and schedule objectives.

We look forward to working with our partners, DOC/NOAA and NASA, as we proceed down the path of convergence. DoD is confident that the integrated, cooperative approach which has led the tri-agency review over the past ten months will continue as we move from studying convergence to actually implementing this important endeavor.

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